

Bailout denied for workers' homes, jobs as

Gov't sinks more billions into failing capitalism

By Jaimeson Champion

Another day, another multi-billion-dollar bailout. The federal government recently announced that it would give away \$326 billion to Citigroup. The government will now be backing approximately one-sixth of Citigroup's \$2 trillion in total assets.

Despite this massive pledge of financial aid, Citigroup shares led the way down in a 680-point market plunge on Dec 1. The price of Citi's stock fell 20 percent on the day. It seems \$326 billion just doesn't buy what it used to.

Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson has attempted to paint the bailout of Citigroup as a regrettable but ultimately necessary use of taxpayer money. Citigroup, like all the other bailout recipients, is "too big to fail," according to Paulson.

But while Paulson tries to spin the criminal giveaways to the banks as emergency measures born out of unprecedented circumstances, the reality is that the Federal Reserve System and the modern-day Treasury Department were designed to help the capitalist class in the U.S. maintain its grip on power during times of economic crisis.

The government that claims to be of, by and for the people will spend whatever it takes of the workers' tax money to preserve the class system that exploits their labor.

**How the Fed was born in stealth**

In late November of 1910, a group of the most powerful bankers and financiers, along with Secretary of the Treasury A.P. Andrews and members of the U.S. Senate, met in secret at the Jekyll Island Club—an all-white, segregated, elitist country club off the coast of Georgia. That secret meeting laid the framework for the U.S. Federal Reserve System, which was officially established in 1913.

Bertie Charles Forbes, the founder of Forbes magazine, later described the meeting: "Picture a party of the nation's greatest bankers stealing out of New York on a private railroad car under cover of darkness, stealthily riding hundred of miles South ... sneaking onto an island deserted by all but a few servants ... under such rigid secrecy that the names of not one of them was once mentioned, lest the servants learn the identity and disclose to the world this strangest, most secret expedition in the history of American finance. I am not romancing; I am giving to the

world, for the first time, the real story of how the foundation of our new currency system was written. ..." (Current Opinion, December 1916)

One of the most prominent bankers at the meeting, besides J.P. Morgan, was Frank A. Vanderlip. Vanderlip was president of National City Bank of New York, which eventually grew into the modern-day Citigroup.

By the dawn of the 20th century, National City was already the largest U.S. bank. Controlled by the Rockefeller family, it had expanded rapidly during the 1890s. Profits from U.S. imperial conquest in the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Cuba, following the Spanish-American War of 1898, were funneled into National City's coffers. Vanderlip, then Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, had negotiated a \$200 million loan from the bank to the government to finance the war. He was later rewarded with the post of bank president.

The bank was a pioneering force in the creation of securities and derivatives—the late 19th-century predecessors of today's collateralized debt obligations (CDOs).

The Jekyll Island meeting was organized in the wake of the Panic of 1907.

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EDITORIAL ON MUMBAI

Poverty is violence

The Bush administration has rushed the highest-ranking officer in the Pentagon—Joint Chiefs of Staff head Adm. Michael Mullen—and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to South Asia. The cover story is that they're going to "defuse tensions" between India and Pakistan.

What's their real agenda? To use the crisis over the terrorist attacks in Mumbai as a lever to bring Pakistan more fully into the U.S.-led war against Afghanistan.

We have only the interpretation of Indian and U.S. intelligence agencies about who organized the attacks. They are blaming a Muslim group supposedly based in Pakistan for the three-day siege of two elite five-star hotels in Mumbai. Also attacked was a fashionable cafe, a Zionist-affiliated Jewish community center, two government buildings that house the legislative assembly, one of India's busiest train stations and a hospital. The official death toll as of Dec. 2 has risen to 173, with hundreds more wounded. Twenty-two of the dead are foreigners,

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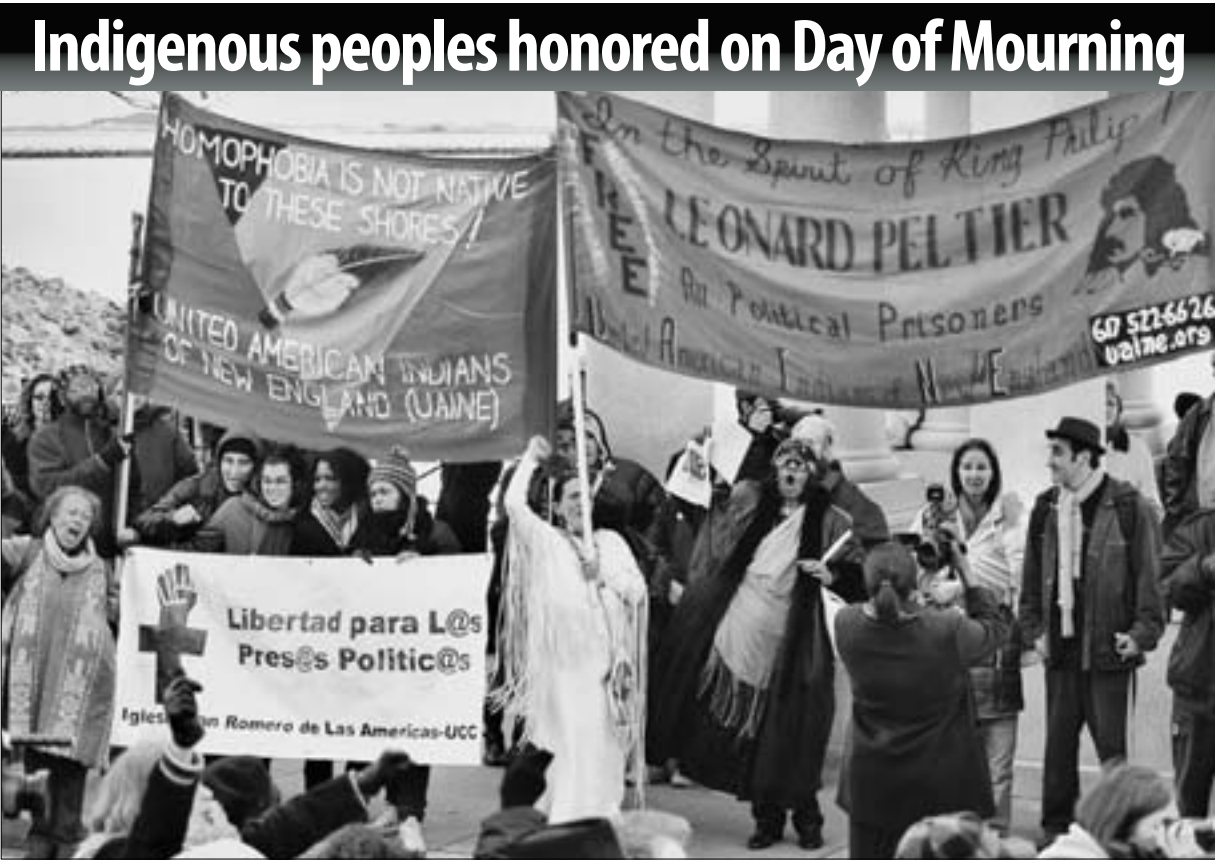
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On "Thanksgiving" Day, marchers in Plymouth, Mass., united many struggles. Article on page 5. WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN



# WW Fund Drive: *Be creative!*

By Gloria Rubac

I was asked to talk about the WWP Fund Drive, which literally keeps our party headquarters and our wonderful newspaper going.

I'm asking you to join in making this fund drive a success. Yes, times are hard for us. Just like others in our class, we face difficult times, but because of this we need our party and our paper more than ever. We need the new book "Low-Wage Capitalism." We need our program to fight foreclosures.

I want to share with you how important our newspaper is to a group of workers who pass it around until the pages wear thin: prisoners. We send subscriptions to hundreds of prisoners for free.

I want to read from a letter I got last week from a prisoner in Texas named Nanon Williams.

Nanon was arrested at age 17 in Houston and framed up by the lying creeps working for the Houston Police Department Crime Lab, who regularly manufactured evidence for the DAs to use so they could put people away, innocent or guilty. The ballistic expert in Nanon's case said that a man was killed by a bullet from Nanon's gun. He was sure of it. So the jury sent this young man to death row.

Several years later, when Nanon found an attorney who agreed to take his case, a real ballistic expert proved that the bullet was NOT from Nanon's gun. The Houston police expert said, "Sorry, I made a mistake. It wasn't his gun after all."

But no nice ending yet—17 years later, Nanon is still locked up for a crime he didn't commit. He was 17 when arrested and now is 34. One half his life for something he didn't do.

Workers World newspaper is important to this prisoner and those locked up with him. Nanon receives a bundle of 10 papers every week. The last time I visited him, I asked if he was still receiving the paper and how he was using it. I got a letter this week. This is what he says:

"I receive 10 copies of the paper every week and I use them in what we call 'Incognitive Intervention Classes.' These classes are designed to make people think about their actions, the choices they make and what impact they have on society, as well as changing belief windows that have a negative impact on people's thoughts and actions. Every day we select three articles from Workers World



WW PHOTO: GARY WILSON  
Rubac at Workers World Party conference.

to not only be read so we can learn about current events but we discuss the politics behind those articles as well. These 10 papers are shared by two of these classes that we hold daily.

"Then at the end of the week on Friday nights, I take them to Tyleem Services. They are technically like church services, but for the Muslim community. Many Blacks and Latinos go to these Tyleem services because we discuss things that can change and shape our community. This group gets to keep the papers. But before these services, I sometimes use the papers with something called the PEER Health classes. Then on Sunday I have my own study group with brothers here to discuss political ideas that many are not aware of but want to learn about.

"So, you asked what I do with the papers. There it is." The last thing Nanon told me in his letter was this: "If the paper is too expensive to send to us, let me know. Once a month I can collect stamps to send to the Party as a donation if that would help."

The prisoners all work but get not one penny for their labor. But most do have stamps. Even the indigent prisoners are allowed a few stamps.

For many people, Workers World is a voice for the voiceless. It speaks for the most oppressed of our class, whether in the Gaza Strip or in Huntsville, Texas. It brings the world to all of us with a revolutionary perspective and analysis.

The struggle takes a lot. It takes money. We have to pay the rent, the printer and so on. It takes our two fund drives each year as well as the Workers World Supporter Program to make all this possible.

If you live in a city without a branch of the Party or if, for whatever reason, you cannot be physically active in a branch, then consider being a Workers World Supporter. You can contribute money monthly or make a yearly donation. Either way, you will become a vital part of the Party, a supporter who financially contributes to the newspaper in a concrete way.

It is now Fall Fund Drive time. We need each and every one to contribute what we can. If Texas prisoners can donate their precious stamps in order to have the paper, can't we donate our hard-earned money to make the drive a success?

We need to think outside the box to raise this money. Be creative. It is our responsibility. It is on our back to do this. Can we raise \$60,000?

***Si se puede!***

## Support the paper that supports the workers

The boss can't tell us what to print. In Workers World you get to read the true story behind the struggle. Workers World publishes pro-worker, anti-war, anti-racist news because we are truly independent. You can't get anything like it in any of the big business controlled media. We have no corporate backers or advertisers. We rely completely on your donations.

Become a member of the Workers World Supporter program and help build the newspaper year round. A donation of \$100 a year is just about 25¢ a day.

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Send a check or money order using the form. To contribute using a credit card, use our secure online Web site at [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org)

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# Community fights racist frame-up of city councilor

By Frank Neisser  
Boston

Boston's African-American community of Roxbury and a broad coalition of supporters are standing strong with City Councilor Chuck Turner, who has come out fighting ever since his Nov. 21 arrest. The attack on Turner, who has been charged with extorting \$1,000 and lying to the FBI, is viewed as part of a frame-up scheme to undermine the African-American community's right to strong political representation. Turner won in the last election with more than 80 percent of the vote.

At 6 a.m. on Nov. 21, seven armed FBI agents had gone to Turner's front door, terrorizing his household. He was arrested an hour later at City Hall, where he was already beginning his work day, and taken in handcuffs to Worcester, 45 minutes from Boston.

At the first word of the arrest, activists and allies went into high gear. Rank-and-file union leaders from United Steel Workers Local 8751—the Boston School Bus Drivers—along with organizers from the International Action Center, Women's Fightback Network, Restore Our Heat & Lights Campaign, the Boston Workers Alliance, the youth group FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) and other community groups came forward to mobilize solidarity, defend the Turner household and offer whatever assistance was necessary.

People's lawyers Barry Wilson and John Pavlos were secured and political supporters gathered in Worcester. Turner left the court surrounded by 40 supporters holding up signs and chanting, "Chuck, Chuck,

Chuck!" He immediately spoke out to the throng of media, proclaiming his innocence and condemning the FBI abuse as well as the attack on his constituents' right to the representative of their choice.

Horrific attacks on Turner from the Boston media and all corners of the capitalist establishment have thrown the concept of "innocent until proven guilty" out the window. In an unprecedented action, City Council President Maureen Feeney stripped him of all his committee chair positions and called for a special session of the City Council to consider removing him.

On Nov. 24 Turner, along with 500 supporters, held a rally and news conference on the steps of City Hall to demand that Feeney call off the City Council hearing and restore him to his committee positions. Feeney had to cancel the session.

About 70 community and grassroots supporters, including a delegation of more than 35 rank-and-file members of Local 8751, participated in another news conference and rally at Turner's district office in Roxbury on Nov. 26. Turner said: "The media has not produced one story on the fact that I am the only Boston city councilor who in the modern era has maintained an office in the community. There has not been one story around the fact that my campaign owes Terri [Turner's spouse] and I \$140,000 because of our investment of our own resources in the maintenance of the district office."

A mass meeting is scheduled for Dec. 2, and a Solidarity Day rally for



WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Hundreds support Chuck Turner at City Hall rally, Nov. 24.

Dec. 9. Turner's next court appearance is at 3 p.m. on Dec. 10 at the Moakley Federal Court House in Boston. Visit [SupportChuckTurner.com](http://SupportChuckTurner.com) for details.

Turner's massive support is based on four decades of grassroots activism and community organizing. He fought for jobs through the Third World Jobs Clearinghouse and United Community Construction Workers. He was a founder of the Boston Workers Alliance, the only organization of unemployed workers in the state, which also fights for formerly incarcerated workers' right to a job.

Turner has fought on every community and progressive issue, from immigrant rights to foreclosure and eviction blockades and against war. Recently he spearheaded a campaign to restore heat and lights to those whose utilities have been shut off.

The attack on Turner seeks to cut off the grassroots leadership necessary to bring about the change people are looking and hoping for.

U.S. Attorney for the District of

Massachusetts Michael Sullivan, who is prosecuting Turner as well as State Sen. Dianne Wilkerson (see *Workers World*, Nov. 13), is a notorious right-wing Republican whose specialty is politically motivated false prosecutions. He prosecuted the Plymouth 25—Native activists and allies who were the victims of a police riot against their peaceful demonstration on the National Day of Mourning ("Thanksgiving" Day) in 1997.

Turner's case is part of a national campaign of racist, politically motivated prosecutions. These include the cases of: African-American Milwaukee Alderman

Michael McGee, who was convicted in October based on similar FBI entrapment and trial by media; Rep. William Jefferson of Louisiana, who was subjected to an unprecedented FBI raid of his congressional office and was forced out of his committee positions by Speaker Nancy Pelosi even before being indicted; and Rep. Cynthia McKinney, who was lambasted for defending herself from racist guards at the Capitol in Washington, D.C.

These are but the most recent chapters in a long history of racist political frame-ups and abuse by the FBI that goes back to the attacks on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, Adam Clayton Powell and Shirley Chisholm.

Robert Traynham of the International Action Center said: "Sullivan should be fired for politically motivated, racist frame-up prosecutions and abuse of the FBI. The FBI should cease and desist from its longstanding pattern of frame-ups and harassment of oppressed community leaders." □

## Solidarity events planned

# Before it's too late, stop the murder of Mumia!

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

Dec. 6 will be a day of international solidarity to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. It is sorely needed. Lynne Abraham, the Philadelphia district attorney known as "the deadliest D.A. in the U.S.," is calling on the U.S. Supreme Court to reinstate Abu-Jamal's death sentence despite mounds of evidence showing his innocence.

If Abraham's filing is granted, it will mean execution for Abu-Jamal without any new hearing or trial.

Abu-Jamal is a journalist and former Black Panther railroaded into prison. His case is supported the world over. He continues a weekly broadcast Live from Death Row at [www.PrisonRadio.org](http://www.PrisonRadio.org), and his commentaries can also be read in *Workers World*.

This month marks the 27th year of Abu-Jamal's frame-up and unjust imprisonment on Pennsylvania's death row. Activities are planned in many U.S. cities and in Mexico:

In **Philadelphia** a Dec. 6 rally will start at noon at District Attorney Abraham's office, located at 2 South Penn Square on the east side of City Hall. It will be followed by a march to the Federal Court building at Fifth and Market. For more information on this event, contact International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal at 215-476-8812.

On Dec. 9, a program with a film showing and food will help educate people on Abu-Jamal's case. The event, co-sponsored by ICFMAJ and the Philadelphia International Action Center, will start at 7 p.m. at Calvary Church, 48th St. and Baltimore Ave.

The **Baltimore** All Peoples Congress will host a solidarity event on Dec. 5 at the Cork Factory Gallery, fourth floor, 302 E. Federal Building. A documentary film on the case will be followed by signing people up to attend the rally in Philadelphia the next day.

In **Charlotte, N.C.**, on Dec. 6, the newly released documentary "In Prison My Whole Life" will be shown. It tells Abu-Jamal's story from the perspective of William Francome, who was born in London on Dec. 9, 1981, the day Abu-Jamal was arrested in Philadelphia and charged with the murder of a police officer. Never-seen-before footage and brand-new evidence create a case for reasonable doubt while exploring the socio-political climate in the U.S., past and present.

Sponsored by the Charlotte Free Mumia Coalition and Students for a Democratic Society-UNCC, the screening will take place at 7 p.m. at Charlotte Energy Solutions, 337 Baldwin Ave.

In **Cleveland** people from many organizations will come together at the Unitarian Universalist Society on Dec. 6 to protest injustice and present revolutionary art. Speakers will address Abu-Jamal's case along with messages of solidarity read by family members, from prisoners unjustly convicted in connection with the 1993 Lucasville prison uprising.

Talks will also address other prisoners who currently face execution or harsh sentences, including Puerto Rican activists in U.S. jails. Artists from the Hip Hop Workshop will present music, poetry and dance. The event starts at 7 p.m. at 2728 Lancashire Rd., Cleveland Heights.

On Dec. 3 in **Raleigh, N.C.**, youth from Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) will host a film "Power to the People" about Abu-Jamal's case. The program starts at 6 p.m. in the Ballroom at Shaw University's Garrey Hall.



The **San Diego** Free Mumia Coalition will host a forum on Dec. 7 from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Malcolm X Library, 5150 Market St. at Euclid. Speakers at the solidarity program include Sabrina Green from the Baltimore Free the MOVE 9; John

Parker, Los Angeles International Action Center; David Welsh of the Haiti Action Committee; and Paul LouLou Chery, General Secretary, Federation of Haitian Workers. Sponsors also include African American Writers and Artists, Langston Hughes Poetry Circle and the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee.

A statement from Abu-Jamal will be read at the annual international labor conference held Dec. 5-7 in **Tijuana**, Mexico, along with a presentation on his case and the case of the Cuban Five. This important conference provides an opportunity for workers from different countries to learn from each other's struggles. Some family members of the Cuban Five will be present.

## Black LGBT groups hit Prop 8

Black lesbian/gay/bi/trans organizations sponsored a Nov. 23 rally in Leimert Park, considered the Black cultural center of South Central Los Angeles, to protest the recently passed Proposition 8. They pointed out how it amounts to an assault on the civil and human rights of same-sex couples and aggravates the economic crisis already burdening working people by denying them health care and financial benefits afforded only in marriage.

Chants like "We're your mother, your father, your sister and your brother—Now is the time to love one another" stressed unity. As the marchers walked through a main shopping and public transportation area, people on foot and driving showed their support.

At right, Monique Blassingame, Nichole Mounsey and Ashley Carroll march proudly to overturn Prop. 8. Attendees included members of the International Action Center, SEIU Local 721's Latino Caucus, Love @ Work and the Jordan/Rustin Coalition.

—John Parker



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH



# Help stop eviction of disabled woman

By Kris Hamel  
Detroit

Vida Brown has lived in her home in Sturgis, Mich., since 1992. Sturgis is in south-central Michigan, near the Indiana border, about 160 miles southwest of Detroit. The 2000 census recorded the town's population at 11,285, with only 1.23 percent African-American residents. Brown is a disabled African-American woman in her 50s. A chemical exposure at work left her with feeding tubes and severe medical challenges. She became a victim of mortgage fraud when she attempted to save her home after she fell behind on payments due to medical expenses. A bogus mortgage company, which subsequently had its license revoked, tricked Brown into signing her house over

to them. She continued making what she believed were the mortgage payments. Recently, after being served with eviction papers, Brown learned she had been scammed and the house was in foreclosure. She discovered she had lost her property rights and was only a tenant in her own home. She filed complaints with the FBI, police and the State Office of Financial Services. Despite these facts, District Court Judge William Welty, Deutsche Bank and its eviction attorneys at Trott & Trott, P.C. have refused to even hear or review this information. Instead they have forged ahead to throw Brown out into the street. Brown contacted people's attorney Vanessa Fluker in Detroit seeking assistance in her eviction case after she had been denied help by a local Legal Aid

office. Although Fluker was unable to represent her, since Sturgis is so far from Detroit, she immediately contacted the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions. She also helped Brown obtain legal counsel from attorney Richard Black in Holland, Mich. The coalition put out a statewide email blast on Nov. 24 to thousands of people asking them to support Brown. National emails were also sent, and people responded from cities as far away as New York and Baltimore. Brown's supporters flooded the Deutsche Bank headquarters on Wall Street with calls demanding they stop the illegal foreclosure and eviction. The coalition's email blast noted: "In light of the fact there has been fraud, and despite the fact that the eviction of Mrs. Brown could cause severe medical damage and possible death, pursuant to letters

from her physicians—the bank and their attorneys don't care. Voice your support for Mrs. Vida Brown of Sturgis, Mich. Demand that Deutsche Bank stop the eviction. It's time to force the banks that are being bailed out every day with billions of our tax dollars to respect the human rights of the victims of the current crisis." Because of the pressure applied to Deutsche Bank, Brown and her attorney were able to win a stay of eviction in U.S. District Court in Grand Rapids, Mich. The struggle to save Brown's home is not over. Supporters are urged to contact Deutsche Bank at 212-250-7125, the bank's media communications representative Mayura Hooper at 212-250-5536, and Trott & Trott law firm at 248-642-2515 to demand justice for Vida Brown and to stop the illegal foreclosure and eviction. □

# Charge police bias in arrest of reporter

By Bryan G. Pfeifer  
Detroit

Community outrage and support are building over the arrest of people's journalist Diane Bukowski. Many view this as a political attack on the entire progressive movement in metro Detroit. "Everybody's support raised me. It fired me up," Bukowski told supporters as she emerged from her arraignment at 36th District Court in Detroit on Nov. 20. A rousing ovation greeted the journalist from dozens of activists who had just packed the courtroom to support her. Bukowski is a freelance reporter for the progressive weekly newspaper The Michigan Citizen, as well as a long-time anti-racist fighter and community advocate. She has been charged with five felony counts of assaulting, resisting and obstructing a police officer. Bukowski is well-known and respected for her work exposing police brutality and police murders in Detroit. Her reporting has also examined a wide range of other community concerns, such as the foreclosure epidemic, utility shutoffs and corruption in the public school system. Teresa Kelly, publisher of The Michigan Citizen, told Workers World after the arraignment that the newspaper is fully backing Bukowski. The publication is one

of the most progressive weekly community newspapers in the U.S., with hard-hitting reporting on a range of political, social and economic issues affecting poor and working people, especially people of color. The newspaper also publishes well-respected cultural content that promotes and reports on numerous events and activities happening in the Black community. **Background to Bukowski's arrest** The following details are from reports by Bukowski and Kelly in the Nov. 16-22 and Nov. 23-29 editions of The Michigan Citizen newspaper: On Nov. 4, while covering a fatal police chase in which a motorcyclist and a pedestrian died, Bukowski—with her press credentials in full view—was arrested while attempting to take photographs of the grisly scene. The motorcyclist was James Willingham, 42, a father of 10 children. Jeffrey Frazier, 32, an autistic man, was the pedestrian victim. According to Bukowski, who has reported on several police chases, she wasn't aware she had crossed any yellow police tape. A state trooper yelled at her from across the street, "Who the f--- do you think you are?" Bukowski presented her credentials to the trooper, who then took her camera and

deleted the photos, handcuffed Bukowski and had other officers put her in a squad car. She was released that night, but a warrant was issued three days later. Bukowski was originally charged with a single misdemeanor count of obstructing an investigation. But Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy charged Bukowski with five felony counts that carry in total a possible sentence of 20 years in prison. Bukowski turned herself in to 36th District Court as ordered on Nov. 18 for a 1 p.m. arraignment, which the court canceled at the last minute. Numerous Bukowski supporters had shown up for that hearing. Detroit police claim the delay was needed to fingerprint her, but her lawyer said the police had her prints and photos. She was released into the custody of her attorney. At her arraignment two days later, Bukowski was released on a \$5,000 personal recognizance bond. **Hands off Bukowski—drop all charges now!** A groundswell of support continues building for Bukowski. Supporters plan to pack the courtroom again on Dec. 16 for a preliminary examination in 36th District Court. Support notices and email campaigns are being issued from numerous com-

munity organizations, including the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, Michigan Welfare Rights, Call 'Em Out, Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, Latinos Unidos, Detroit Green Party, MECAWI, the Coalition to Save DPS and others. The ACLU and the National Lawyers Guild are closely monitoring the case. United Auto Workers Local 2334 President David Sole wrote to Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy on Nov. 18 on his union's letterhead: "These charges are unbelievable and the accusations incredible. In view of the fact that Diane is well known for her reporting of police brutality and misconduct, one can only conclude that she was targeted by the police in this case for retribution. In addition, the prosecution of Ms. Bukowski is clearly an attack on the freedom of the press." Sole is joining with other labor and community activists and organizations to assist with the needs of Bukowski's legal defense, including raising funds, outreach, media and more. A defense committee is in the process of being formed. Supporters are encouraged to contact Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy and demand all charges against Bukowski be dropped immediately. Write to Worthy at 1200 Frank Murphy Hall of Justice, 1441 St. Antoine, Detroit, MI 48226; call 313-224-5777; or fax 313-224-0974. □

# ILWU locals honor May Day organizer

Special to Workers World  
Vancouver, British Columbia

The eight-hour shutdown of West Coast ports last May Day continues to resonate internationally. On Nov. 10 in Vancouver, Longshore Workers Union Local 400 Maritime Division and Longshore Local 500 sponsored a dinner for Clarence Thomas, ILWU Local 10 Executive Board member. Thomas is co-chair, along with Jack Heyman, of the Portworkers May Day Organizing Committee. The dinner, held at the Maritime Labor Centre auditorium, was attended by officers, rank-and-file members, pensioners and their families. Terry Engler, president of Vancouver's Local 400, said this about May Day: "It is unfortunate that there was virtually no reporting of the May Day shutdown in our media, and therefore many of our members have no knowledge of this important action, but our members will have the opportunity to hear from Clarence Thomas at the dinner event. I believe that all union members, especially ILWU members,



PHOTO: MIKE EISENGER

ILWU leaders Frank Scigliano, Terry Engler, Clarence Thomas, Gordie Westrand and Tom Dufresne.

would benefit from Clarence's experience, knowledge regarding rank-and-file solidarity and the actions of the ILWU." During his talk at the dinner Thomas explained in detail the May Day "No Peace, No War" mobilization. This historic action, initiated by ILWU Local 10 in San Francisco and led by rank-and-filers, called for an immediate end to the war and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Middle East. Thomas stated that this was

the first time in the U.S. that workers had withheld their labor to oppose U.S. imperialism. The action took place despite the fact that the union leadership withdrew its request to waterfront employers that they accommodate closing the ports on May 1, 2008. The May Day action was a rank-and-file-led mobilization in the same tradition as the Million Worker March at the Lincoln Memorial on Oct. 17, 2004. This past May 26-27, Thomas was a keynote speaker at May Day Eye Witness Forum sponsored by the Canadian Peace Alliance and held at the 2008 Canadian Labour Congress in Toronto. Present at that labor and peace-activist gathering were several ILWU Longshore officers. The officers of Locals 400 and 500 invited Thomas to speak on the issues he addressed during his speech in Toronto.

The topics included the history of ILWU international solidarity as well as the particulars of the coastwide mobilization for the May Day action. The program began with Thomas presenting Million Worker March T-shirts to Tom Dufresne, the Canadian president of the ILWU Longshore Division; Gordie Westrand, president of ILWU Local 500; Frank Scigliano, president of ILWU Ship and Dock Foremen Local 514; and Terry Engler. Local 500 presented Brother Thomas with Bluesprint, a comprehensive collection of literature and spoken word of Blacks in British Columbia. He also received the video "Betrayed" from Local 400. This documentary captures the history of the Canadian Seaman's Union, which brought the eight-hour day, sick leave and pay increases to an industry known for low wages and brutal working conditions. Brother Thomas was invited to return to speak to labor organizations in Vancouver in April 2009. □



## ON THE PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

### SAG inches toward strike

The Screen Actors Guild and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers met for contract talks Nov. 20-21 for the first time in four months. But even the intervention of a federal mediator couldn't forge an agreement acceptable to SAG. The union says the producers "insist on terms we cannot possibly accept." (New York Times, Nov. 23)

The actors are insisting on payment for work used in Internet videos and other new media—terms which the Writers Guild won after a three-month strike earlier this year. SAG is now in the process of educating its 120,000 members, who have been working without a contract since June 30, on why they should vote for a strike. Before one can be called, a strike must be approved by 75 percent of the members. Stay tuned.

### Midwest flight attendants protest

On the busiest travel day of the year, the Sunday after "Thanksgiving," Midwest Airlines' flight attendants held an information picket at Milwaukee's airport. Members of the Association of Flight Attendants, a unit of the Communications Workers, protested layoffs of their members as jobs were outsourced to nonunion workers. The AFA-CWA members also protested the company's demand for wage cuts.

### Labor Department lies exposed

A Government Accountability Office report released Nov. 24 found that the Bush Labor Department gave Congress false numbers on the supposed cost savings of hiring outside contractors, in an attempt to prove that outsourcing jobs to private companies was more efficient than keeping government employees on the federal payroll. This is yet another example of how the Bush administration has tried to use its muscle to further an anti-worker agenda. (blog.aflcio.org)

### Union support for Cuban Five

Just months before the Cuba-Venezuela-Mexico-North America Labor Conference on Dec. 5-7, the Service Employees Union, representing more than 2 million workers in the U.S. and Canada, called on the Bush administration to grant entry visas to Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez, as well as other family members of the Cuban Five. SEIU is the first national U.S. union to support the five Cubans, who have been unjustly imprisoned in the U.S. on bogus charges for 10 years, despite the fact that their mission was to prevent terrorism against the Cuban people. In a related development, the largest union in Britain and Ireland has organized a campaign to demand freedom for the Cuban Five. (Workers World, Oct. 31) □

### Judge orders release of Woodfox

Albert Woodfox may finally be released. One of the Angola 3, Woodfox has spent most of his life—37 years—in the hellhole of Angola Penitentiary in Louisiana. The prison authorities have been ordered to carry out a Nov. 25 ruling by U.S. District Judge James Brady and release Woodfox

# DAY OF MOURNING: 'It's time for justice!'

By Frank Neisser  
Plymouth, Mass.

Hundreds of people participated in the 39th National Day of Mourning here, organized by the United American Indians of New England, on Nov. 27. The event is held on every U.S. "Thanksgiving" Day to tell the truth about that myth and uncover the real experience of Native peoples in this area since 1492.

After an opening spiritual ceremony, Moonanum James, co-leader of UAINE, related the history of the National Day of Mourning. Moonanum James is the son of Wamsutta Frank James, who founded UAINE and initiated the first National Day of Mourning in 1970.

An Aquinnah Wampanoag elder, Wamsutta had been invited to present a speech at a state banquet on the occasion of the 350th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims. He wrote a speech that spoke the truth about the experience of Native people after the arrival of the Pilgrims. When the banquet organizers rejected Wamsutta's speech and tried to substitute one of their own, Wamsutta refused. He and hundreds of other Native people and their supporters declared a National Day of Mourning for Native Americans in Plymouth on "Thanksgiving" Day.

In his opening talk, Moonanum pointed out that the conditions of terrible racism and poverty afflicting Native people still persist. He noted that the election of an African-American president would not be enough to eliminate racism, and that substandard housing, choosing between heating and eating, dying from treatable diseases, lack of educational opportunities, Bureau of Indian Affairs corruption, and government refusal to restore power to Native Nations all still afflict Native peoples today.

Moonanum appealed to President-elect Barack Obama to stop giving taxpayers' money to brokers and bankers and instead use the money to build hous-

ing, clinics, put books in schools and food in people's bellies, and to honor the treaties with Native Nations. He also called on Obama to serve justice and free Leonard Peltier.

Next the rally was addressed by Juan Gonzalez, speaking for the Council of Maya Elders. He spoke of the history of all Native peoples' struggles to keep their way of life alive. He said it was good to have a Black brother in the White House, but that his peoples' struggle was not over, and would not be over until no one was called "illegal," until racism, sexism, homophobia and war had come to an end, until this government recognized sovereign Native Nations, and until Leonard Peltier was free.

Native political prisoner Leonard Peltier sent a message to the 39th National Day of Mourning that was read by Bert Waters (Wampanoag). Peltier is now 64 years old and in his 33rd year of incarceration, even though under federal law he should have been paroled after 30 years. Peltier called for renewed organizing for his defense. He indicated that he saw in Obama's election perhaps his last chance for freedom.

The rally was concluded by Elena Ortiz of Ohkay Owingeh in Northern New Mexico. Elena described how a continuum of peoples' struggles, from Rosa Parks to the occupations of Alcatraz and Wounded Knee, had contributed to the election of an African American as president, but that now it is time to show him what we need and want. She said this is not the time to trust in Washington but rather to stay in the streets to see that Obama does what's necessary, that this is not the end of the road but the first step. Ortiz also gave a moving account of her visit to the Palestine 48 conference in East Jerusalem this past spring, and how the struggle of the people native to the



WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

UAINE co-leader Mahtowin Munro (Lakota) listens as Bert Waters reads Leonard Peltier's message.

area, the Palestinians, was the same as that of Native people here.

The gathering then proceeded to march through Plymouth. Marchers stopped at Plymouth Rock, where Moonanum described an attack on the National Day of Mourning by police in 1997. He explained that the same Michael Sullivan, Plymouth district attorney who prosecuted the 25 people arrested in 1997, is now a U.S. attorney and responsible for the FBI entrapment and harassment of elected leaders of color, including Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner. Moonanum called on everyone to come out in support of Turner.

The march also stopped at Post Office Square where, for 20 years, the Pilgrim settlers displayed the head of Metacomb, leader of the King Phillip war, on a spike. A plaque commemorating and explaining that history is now at the site, part of a settlement reached by UAINE in the Plymouth 25 case.

The march was followed by a pot-luck social. □

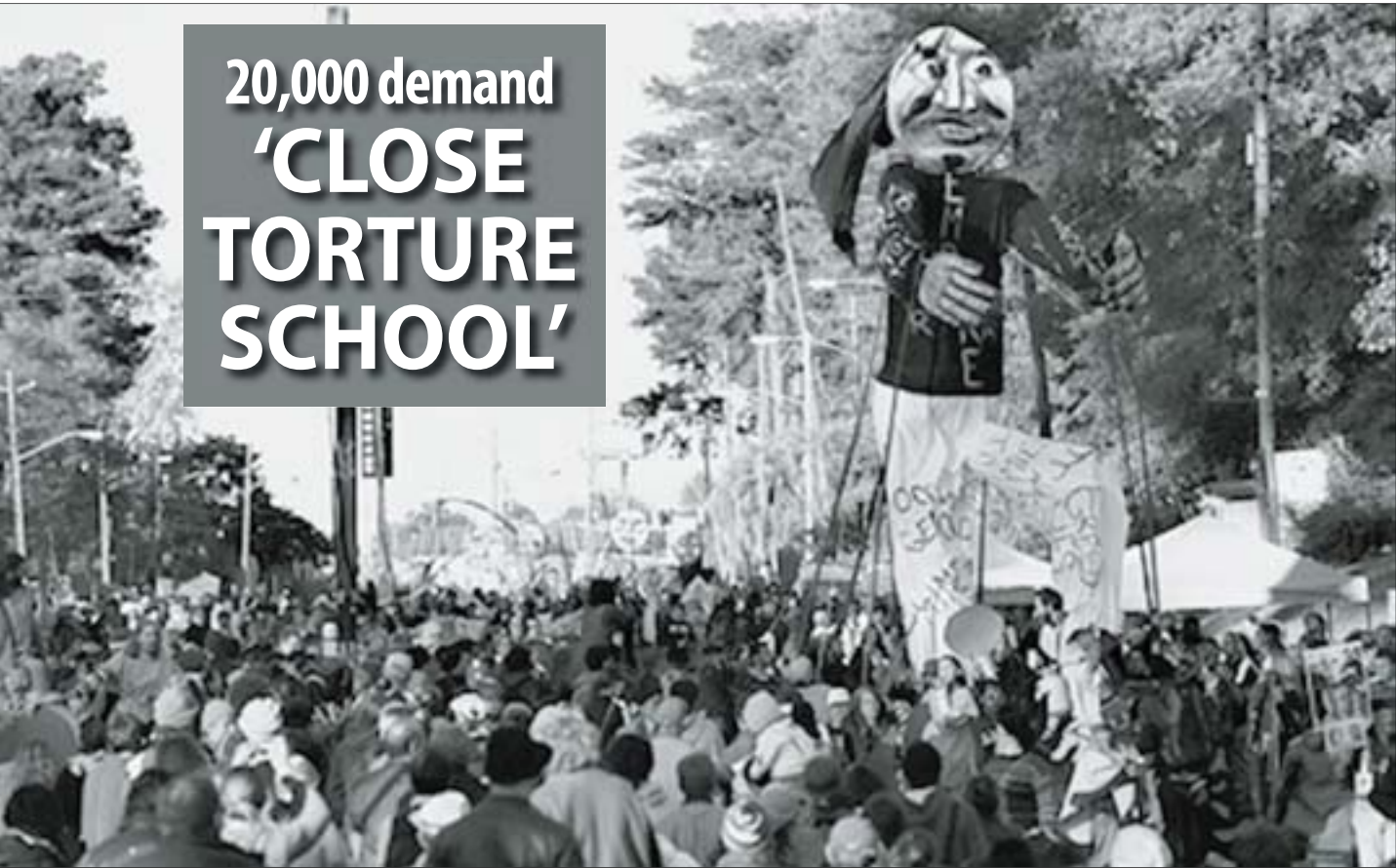


PHOTO: SOA WATCH

The annual protest at the gates of Ft. Benning in Columbus, Ga., drew an estimated 20,000 demonstrators this year on Nov. 21-23. Through music, speeches, banners, marches, chants and acts of civil disobedience, the activists demanded the closing of the infamous School of the Americas, used for training in torture. Young people from high schools and col-

leges traveled from across the country to join torture survivors from Latin America, trade unionists, nuns and clergy, veterans, civil rights leaders and others to declare, "Yes, we can close the School of Assassins." Six people were arrested for trespassing onto the military base. For more information, visit [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org).

—Dianne Mathiowetz

on bail. Two months earlier, Brady had overturned Woodfox's conviction in the 1972 killing of a prison guard. But the vengeful authorities refused to release him and appealed the ruling. The judge says Woodfox has no conviction for anything and can't be held any longer.

—Deirdre Griswold

## Bailout, bankruptcy or workers’ control

# The Big Three crisis: which way forward?

By David Sole  
Detroit

The crisis surrounding the future of the Big Three U.S. auto manufacturers has focused on a single question—federal bailout loans or bankruptcy? The recent spectacle of the top General Motors, Ford and Chrysler executives—with the United Auto Workers’ national leadership in tow—being grilled and all but humiliated at Capitol Hill hearings revolved solely on this question.

It appears that Washington politicians, with the backing of Wall Street, are currently opposed to any sharing of the bank bailout money with the Big Three through loans or otherwise. Why? To listen to the politicians and the regimented media chorus line, they are opposed to the big bonuses of the CEOs and other top bosses of the auto companies. Plenty of attention has been given to this factor. The other issue appears to be “letting the market take its course.”

None of this can be taken for good coin. These are the very same politicians who only weeks ago willingly opened the Treasury vaults to the most overpaid, corrupt, crooked bankers, mortgage firms and insurance companies. They gave unlimited funds to the very same banking executives who precipitated the current economic collapse. You can be sure that these big shots aren’t going to accept minimum wage or a cut to their million-dollar bonuses.

So why attack this single group of business leaders now? The reason is that Wall Street and a significant section of the U.S. ruling class want to destroy the UAW.

The Big Three executives have no love for the union. They have been ruthless since the late 1970s, wresting ever-greater concessions from the UAW workers. Wage cuts, job cuts, plant closings, increased productivity and benefit cuts have been relentlessly pushed on these hardworking union members. However, the Big Three

bosses also have a healthy respect for the power that the autoworkers and their union possess—even if the union hasn’t unleashed that power in recent times.

The rest of the ruling class clearly want to force the Big Three corporations into bankruptcy proceedings where they hope the court will allow the UAW contracts to be gutted. Wages could be slashed, perhaps to levels like those at American Axle, a GM spin-off that successfully cut wages by 50 percent, even after a strike lasting months last winter.

The bankruptcy threat is also being used to ensure that any federal bailout includes similar attacks on UAW retirees. That way pension funds could be looted and pensions unloaded on an already-strained federal pension “guarantee” program—which covers only a percentage of a worker’s pension and no medical benefits.

The media hammer every day about how overpaid the autoworkers are compared to most other workers. These same mouthpieces for the ruling class, however, have never supported raising the wages of non-union and underpaid workers. The ruling class is already preparing, in case the UAW tries to fight back, to divide the working class—pitting low-wage workers against higher-paid workers.

Why is the ruling class so bent on destroying the UAW and other unions? The bosses are already “having their way” with non-unionized workers. Unions in the private sector represent only about 7 to 8 percent of the workforce.

Their problem is that the UAW and the other unions could become—if they had the will and determination as well as an anti-capitalist program—a pole of attraction and a center for resistance for the broad masses of workers, the poor and even the shrinking middle class.

The big unions have buildings, networks of communications, newspapers and magazines, trained speakers, press departments and paid staffs. If the UAW or other

unions decided to resist, not only to protect their own members but to fight back on behalf of all poor and working people, they could become a powerful force.

This apparatus could be turned against the bailout for the banks. And it could demand national health care, a real jobs program, a moratorium on foreclosures, and funding for education and the environment.

This is what worries the Wall Street billionaire ruling class. And it is what is driving them to move now to eliminate that possibility.

This doesn’t mean that autoworkers, their union or the wider working class should support the \$25 billion loan/bailout of the Big Three as currently proposed. Handing more money to the same auto bosses who got us into this mess won’t solve the problems the auto industry faces.

These CEOs and their henchmen are overpaid and anti-union. They will continue to try to eliminate jobs and cut wages and benefits. Their only concern is maximizing profits, which is what led them to concentrate on making SUVs and trucks domestically, while shipping production of fuel-efficient cars overseas.

It was disgraceful and embarrassing to see UAW President Ron Gettelfinger tagging behind the auto bosses, begging the government to give his masters the huge funding they were seeking.

The UAW rank and file must put forward its own program and intervene independently in the current crisis. A workers’ program must start with recognizing that a job is a worker’s property right. It is the workers who built the plants, maintained the factories and machinery, and did all the work, generating enormous wealth over generations.

**Worker-community control? Yes, we can!**

Since the auto bosses have brought the companies to the brink of ruin, the work-

ers, their unions and the communities in which these factories are situated must assert their right to run the plants and replace the bloated, short-sighted executives and the big shareholders who kept them at the helm.

Worker-community control of the Big Three is the only solution. Under worker-community control, the demand for government funds to rebuild and retool the plants to make energy-efficient cars and mass transit equipment could rally wide support.

Instead of a shrinking workforce in auto, the industry could be reborn and expand—attracting a new generation of autoworkers to good-paying jobs. A worker-community-controlled auto industry would maintain it and hire the engineers and experts needed to retool the industry for the 21st century.

The unions and the workers of the Big Three must also protect the pension funds. These funds must not be allowed to be part of any bankruptcy that might occur. Workers and retirees must be prepared to intervene in the bailout and/or bankruptcy proceedings directly and militantly. If necessary, the workers and retirees might have to take possession of the assets and holdings of the Big Three—similar to the great sit-down strikes of the 1930s—in order to protect their interests.

The first task is to bring the UAW rank and file—and especially the retirees—into a mighty struggle, with demonstrations across the country and in Washington and on Wall Street. Ultimately, it is this struggle that will pose the question of which class is really qualified to rule.

*Sole worked at GM’s Detroit Fleetwood plant from 1971 until the plant closed in 1987. He was a leader of the Local 15 Stop Plant Closing Committee and the national Job Is a Right Campaign. Sole is currently president of UAW Local 2334 in Detroit. He is vested in the GM pension plan.*

# Gov’t sinks billions into failing capitalism

*Continued from page 1*

The stock market had crashed, losing 37 percent of its value in a matter of weeks. Large-scale bank runs leveled a number of prominent financial institutions. The credit markets froze, leaving businesses and cities unable to finance their day-to-day operations.

The bankers, plus representatives from the Treasury Department and U.S. Senate, who assembled on Jekyll Island in 1910 were seeking to create a more efficient way for the government to funnel liquidity to the banks during times of economic crisis.

Vanderlip, Morgan and the rest of the ruling-class representatives at the conclave created the framework for the Federal Reserve System in the hope that a government bank would enable them to survive future crises.

## Capitalism and crisis

The Panic of 1907 has sometimes been referred to as a “perfect storm,” suggesting that it took an unlikely combination of events for the crisis to occur. The same term has been used for the stock market crash of 1929 and subsequent Great Depression. The ruling-class politicians and pundits are once again bringing out the “perfect storm” analogy in the current global economic meltdown.

But the Panic of 1907 and the stock

market crash of 1929 were not the result of perfect storms in the financial markets. The current global economic meltdown was not unforeseeable, nor was it caused by lax regulation in the financial markets.

Rather, they are emblematic of the fact that crisis is written into the very DNA of capitalism. Economic crises occur under capitalism because of an economic law that Karl Marx and Frederick Engels first diagnosed, back in the mid-19th century: overproduction.

The capitalists are compelled to constantly accumulate and expand their capital or face extinction at the hands of other capitalists as they compete for market share.

This drive to constantly accumulate and expand leads them to increase production regardless of the limits of the market—that is, of demand backed by the ability to pay.

Crises of overproduction occur at the point during the business cycle when the workers can no longer afford to buy back the multitude of goods and services the capitalists have ordered them to produce, and markets become glutted on an economy-wide level.

These exact processes are evident in the global economy today. Housing markets around the globe have become glutted with millions of unsold homes. During what is usually a busy holiday shopping

season, products are piling up in warehouses and factories as companies’ inventories continue to swell.

When markets become glutted, it puts downward pressure on the prices the capitalists are able to charge for their commodities and services. Once they are forced to lower their prices en masse, the chain of payment obligations interconnected throughout the economy is broken in a million places. This is why crises of overproduction ripple so forcefully through the financial system. These exact processes are evident in the economy today.

After a construction boom from 2000-2006 that featured record-breaking production of residential and commercial buildings, their prices have been in free-fall for two years. The sustained fall in the price of homes has broken the complex chain of payment obligations that stretches from subprime mortgage loans to CDOs—debt obligations—on Citigroup’s balance sheet.

Products ranging from electronics and toys, to automobiles and semi-conductors, continue to pile up on warehouse floors around the globe. Companies are cutting their prices by record amounts, leading capitalist economists to fret about the possibility of a deflationary death spiral. Relatively large companies such as Circuit City are defaulting on their debts

and declaring bankruptcy, putting further strain on the shell-shocked financial system.

## Déjà vu: chaos of overproduction

Crises of overproduction, such as the one the world is currently suffering through, are inherent to the capitalist mode of production. Frederick Engels’ description of crises of overproduction in “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific,” written in 1880, reads like a play-by-play description of the processes that have unfolded in the economy over the last two years.

Engels wrote: “Commerce is at a standstill, the markets are glutted, products accumulate, as multitudinous as they are unsaleable, hard cash disappears, credit vanishes, factories are closed, the mass of the workers are in want of the means of subsistence, because they have produced too much of the means of subsistence; bankruptcy follows upon bankruptcy ...”

A recent edition of Forbes magazine bore the headline “How Capitalism Will Save Us.” With layoffs surging, homelessness rising and nearly a billion people around the world going hungry, the question for workers and poor people is: How are we going to save ourselves from capitalism? Engels and Karl Marx, who diagnosed capitalism so long ago, got it right. The answer lies in the struggle for socialism and a world run by workers, not bankers. □



# CUNY students, teachers resist budget cuts

By Heather Cottin  
New York

Students and teachers at the City University of New York have been organizing rallies at their college campuses and at the offices of the CUNY Board of Trustees, protesting threatened cuts to their education.

Furious over a proposed \$600 tuition increase—a result of Gov. David Paterson’s deep cuts in education, health care and other social services in New York state—CUNY students will hold three city-wide protests and rallies against the plan in December.

The announced budget cuts amount to \$51 million for CUNY and more than \$200 million for the State University of New York system.

CUNY is the biggest city university in the United States. Established for New York’s working class in 1847, its tuition was free until the 1970s. Then the Board of Trustees, responding to pressure from militant community movements, allowed open enrollment. This brought in many students of color for the first time. But, also for the first time, the students had to pay tuition.

CUNY is now home to a multinational student body of more than 450,000 in six community colleges and 11 four-year and graduate schools.

New York has gotten its educated working class on the cheap. Salaries at CUNY are low. At some of the community college campuses, where the students are largely people of color, facilities are decrepit.

Some 57 percent of CUNY teachers with doctorates and master degrees are adjuncts or part-timers. These educators have no job security and few benefits. They earn less than \$25,000 a year.

Last spring, part-timers and graduate

students joined in an effort to press their union, the Professional Staff Congress, to negotiate for job security and wage equity. The union vowed to work on this. But CUNY employees had been working without a contract for three years. So when the CUNY Board of Trustees offered a contract, the Delegate Assembly voted for one that did not include the contingent teachers’ demands.

CUNY Contingents United (CCU) was formed in late summer to address this inequity. Made up of graduate student teachers and part-timers, the group began organizing on various campuses.

The financial meltdown has hit New York, as it has most other states. Four days after Paterson announced the cut in education funds, CCU and students from Hunter College and several other campuses held an emergency protest. Some 200 students and faculty came out to oppose the cutbacks and tuition hikes.

In 1975 the big banks that hold city bonds—especially JP Morgan, Chase and Citibank—threatened to bankrupt the city. Subway fares were raised, tuition was imposed, programs were cut, and the working class footed the bill to keep New York afloat.

Now, when Wall Street has been guaranteed more than \$7 trillion by the federal government to continue business as usual, almost half a million of this city’s students and workers have been asked to shoulder the burden of the latest meltdown—again with tuition rises, layoffs and fare hikes.

The people are not buying it.

At a meeting at Hunter, students representing many of the CUNY campuses called for a student strike and expressed solidarity for transit workers whose jobs are also threatened.

The next week, the PSC organized a protest against tuition increases and

CUNY/LaGuardia students at Nov. 24 rally.

WW PHOTO: HEATHER COTTIN



budget cuts that drew about 300 students at LaGuardia Community College. The PSC urged people to sign postcards to “Save CUNY.” The union will send buses to Albany, the state capital, to rally against the cuts and tuition hikes.

Members of a new student group, LaGuardia Students United, spoke against the draconian measures. “We don’t want adjuncts cut,” said Jason Chester, a LaSU officer. “Some of my best teachers are adjuncts.”

Another student said: “The MTA is threatening a fare hike, so my commute will be \$100 a month. It’s impossible. I have taken on extra hours at work to pay for my tuition now.”

“They have hundreds of billions for the bankers, not the people!” said another. An international student said she is already paying twice what New York residents pay and can’t afford to double that.

“I have to work two jobs now for my tuition,” said Mayra Gonzales, a LaSU officer. “I don’t always have enough money for food.”

The students clearly see the connection between the enormous military budget

and the state’s miserly attitude toward education. “No to wars and occupation, we want schools and education,” has been a recurring chant at all the protests.

The CCU vows to “unite with the organized workers’ movement and all working people, immigrants and minorities who together make up the vast majority in this city.”

CUNY cuts are already causing class cancellations and layoffs. Militant CUNY students and workers are organizing for a protracted struggle against the state and the rich capitalists, like New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who command it.

On Dec. 16, when the next cuts will be announced, CCU will hold a mass rally at 4:30 p.m. at the governor’s office on Third Avenue at 41st Street. □

# How banks have sucked mass transit dry

By Tony Murphy  
New York

Fare hikes, layoffs and massive service cuts planned by New York’s bus and subway system—its “doomsday budget”—have been reported as a done deal by the city’s big business media.

But some New York riders and transit workers have met this doomsday attitude with a fighting spirit of protest and resistance.

Holding signs reading, “The banks should bail out the MTA,” members of the Bail Out the People Movement and transit workers held a press conference on Nov. 20 outside a public hearing where the Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced the cuts. The Straphangers Campaign carried giant petitions signed by subway riders. One protester disrupted the hearing.

The media are attempting to address this public outrage by claiming that the hikes and cuts are necessary—that the financial crisis has drastically reduced the revenues state and city governments get from corporate taxes. But the MTA’s officially stated deficit has nothing to do with state and city budgets. The MTA really owes all that money to the banks—most of it for interest payments.

The financial crisis isn’t compelling the MTA to make drastic cuts and fare hikes. The failure of insurance giant AIG and of firms like Ireland’s DEPFA

Bank has investors demanding that the MTA pay hundreds of millions of dollars extra—based on risky, complex borrowing schemes the MTA made in cahoots with these bankers.

Now the MTA’s non-elected board wants its mistakes to be paid for by riders and transit workers.

In 2007 the MTA was already projecting a 2009 budget deficit of \$1.4 billion. At the time, the Straphangers Campaign stated that “this is the deficit after state and city subsidies. The reason that the deficit is so big is because the interest is coming due on the \$32 billion the MTA has borrowed over the last 25 years. By 2010 about 20 percent of the MTA budget will be debt service.”

“Debt service” means “interest owed to investors.” Some of this is interest paid on loans whose principal was paid off years ago. But the banks keep raking in the money.

The MTA now says it is short \$1.2 billion. The New York Times reported Nov. 21 that the MTA’s debt service is \$1.5 billion. This means that all the cuts, layoffs and hikes will go to pay interest to banks that invested in the MTA—banks that are now being given trillions of dollars in bailout money.

“If the budget is approved as is,” reported the Times, “subway riders next year would pay 83 percent of the cost of operating the system, up from 69 percent this year.” (Nov. 21) That means the MTA and other

cities’ transit authorities are playing the role of collection agencies for the banks.

This is why transit agency heads now find their systems being raided by investors for hundreds of millions of dollars, adding up to amounts that dwarf their officially stated deficits.

## ‘Kickback scheme’ exposed

Starting in the early nineties, these transit agency heads collaborated with AIG to arrange a “leaseback scheme.” It involved selling transportation equipment to investors, often banks, and then leasing it back.

Call it a “kickback scheme.” The investment was a tax shelter for banks, which used the equipment’s depreciation to reduce the profits they had to report to the IRS. Transit agencies got big upfront payments—which won juicy bonuses for transit agency big shots. And AIG got big fees for acting as the deals’ guarantor.

Each deal had a contract item stating that if the guarantor lost its Triple-A status, the transit agencies would be in “technical default” and owe back all the money immediately. AIG did lose its Triple-A status—a failure that won it \$150 billion in bailout money from the government—and now each transit agency owes hundreds of millions on multiple AIG-arranged deals.

How much is owed? The New York MTA won’t say. But the Washington, D.C., transit agency was in federal court on Oct. 29 on this very issue, asking for protection

from Belgium-based KBC Bank, which was demanding \$43 million. (Washington Post, Oct. 30)

At a Nov. 18 press conference called by the American Public Transportation Association, the D.C. transit manager said that deal was only one of 14 his agency had made. With him were transit execs from New York, Houston, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Chicago and five other cities. They were begging the government to take over the role of AIG and other previous guarantors. “This would prevent any predatory actions by banks against transit systems and the public,” said Atlanta transit CEO Beverly Scott. (APTA press release)

What is evident to all is that the government has no interest in hampering the banks and their profits in any way. It’s busy transferring as much of the public treasury as possible to the banks—\$7.8 trillion worth at last count.

If the looting of public transportation is going to be stopped, it’s going to be by the people, not the government. The media want us to think the MTA plan is inevitable. But just two years ago, French youth and unions engaged in massive demonstrations and resistance that scrapped an anti-labor, anti-youth law that then-President Jacques Chirac had already signed into law.

It’s possible to push back fare hikes and layoffs. Key to doing so is rejecting any notion of having to “share the burden” with the banks and their lackeys in the MTA. It’s their crisis. Let them solve it. □

The articles on pages 2, 8 and 9 are based on talks to the Nov. 15-16 Workers World Party National Conference.

# Women’s fight for justice and equality

By Kris Hamel

For working-class and oppressed women—especially immigrant women, unemployed, low-paid and low-income women, lesbians and trans women—the struggle for reproductive rights, justice and equality is an important part of the overall working-class struggle against capitalist exploitation and oppression.

Women cannot participate fully in society or in that struggle without the fundamental right to control their own bodies and reproductive capacities.

Without the full participation and leadership of women, the working class will never be able to win the historic battle against the capitalist class. The liberation of women and all the oppressed, no matter what gains we may achieve, will only be assured when the socialist revolution triumphs and a new society begins to be built.

Working-class women factored hugely in the electoral victory of Barack Obama for president. The election was in essence a referendum against racism, a vote to bring jobs to millions of workers in the failing economy, as well as a repudiation of years of reaction that have impacted women in devastating ways.



Kris Hamel  
WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

The overt racism of Hillary Clinton did not win in the end. Nor were women fooled into believing that a racist, right-wing, arch-reactionary like Sarah Palin was deserving of support just because she’s a woman.

On Nov. 4, voters in three states defeated anti-woman, anti-choice ballot initiatives.

In Colorado, the grossly-misnamed “equal rights” amendment would have conferred full legal and constitutional rights on fertilized eggs and thus outlaw all abortions and many types of birth control, as well as give women second-class status in relation to their fertilized eggs. This law was defeated 73 percent to 27 percent.

In South Dakota, voters revisited a law already rejected in 2006. This time the abortion ban supposedly had exceptions for pregnancies resulting from rape or incest, or which endanger a woman’s health. But these were onerous exceptions that would have required women to submit to all kinds of humiliating procedures,

undergo DNA testing, and fulfill other strict requirements in order to prove they were “worthy” of being granted an abortion. Fifty-five percent of voters said no to this abortion ban.

In California, voters for the third time in four years rejected—by 52 percent—another law aimed at young women, requiring them to notify their parents when seeking an abortion, no matter if these girls are neglected, abused or victimized by incest. Many states already have parental notification or parental consent laws that make choosing and getting an abortion an option filled with many difficult obstacles for young women to overcome.

Obama has already pledged to use his executive authority to rescind the global “gag rule” that prohibits aid funding to hundreds of health clinics around the world if abortion is even mentioned as an option for women. This policy, which Bush implemented, has had severe detrimental effects, such as unsafe abortion being the main cause of death for 55 percent of the women who die in Ethiopia.

Many hope that Obama will appoint justices to the U.S. Supreme Court who will affirm Roe v. Wade, the 1973 decision—after years of militant struggle—that legalized women’s right to choose abortion.

If women rely on the Democratic Congress, however, to initiate pro-reproductive rights legislation—such as to over-

turn the Hyde Amendment that denies Medicaid funding to millions of poor women for abortions—we need to think again.

Only 42 percent of all House members in the new Congress are abortion rights supporters. The U.S. Senate now has only 38 members, an increase of three, committed to reproductive rights. Women, especially working-class women, are a distinct minority in both houses of Congress.

The anti-woman, right-wing agenda to turn back the clock for women’s rights and women’s health is not going to abate, whether it’s on a state-by-state basis or nationally. There will be many battles ahead.

As revolutionaries we need to give our full solidarity to every struggle to restore and expand reproductive rights and justice for all women, especially poor women and women of color, along with demanding free universal health care for all.

We need to continue to fight for housing, education, health care, jobs at living wages, childcare, transportation, nutritious affordable food, and everything else that’s a prerequisite for a decent, quality life.

The capitalist meltdown will increasingly propel working-class and oppressed women into these struggles. The great hopes and expectations of working-class women will be realized in the epic battles against capitalism. □

# Women, economic crisis and fightback



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

By Phebe Eckfeldt

Less than a week before the historic election of Barack Obama, racist, right-wing forces were continuing in their

effort to bring him down and threaten other Black politicians. Immigration and Customs Enforcement tried to deport Obama’s aunt, Zeituni Onyango, who had been living in South Boston since 2002. She was forced to move out of state.

Then the FBI entrapped and arrested African-American State Sen. Dianne Wilkerson on alleged corruption charges. She was never indicted nor did a grand jury convene. Wilkerson has represented the African-American community in the State Senate for 15 years and is very popular due to her progressive stances, including supporting same-sex marriage rights. Our party defended both women.

Women are suffering the brunt of the crisis, especially women of color, single mothers, older women, immigrant wom-

en, disabled women, and lesbian, bi and trans women. For many poor and working women, life is a constant struggle to provide the most basic necessities for themselves and their children. Some 15 million women in the U.S. live in poverty. One out of three single mothers is officially poor and one out of five female seniors is poor. Black and Latina women are twice as likely as white women to be poor. Thirteen percent of children in the U.S. live below the poverty line.

Women earn less than men, are more likely to work part-time, less likely to have health insurance, and are less likely to be eligible for unemployment insurance.

Since [Bill] Clinton eliminated welfare in 1996, the number of single mothers who are unemployed and who receive no welfare assistance has doubled. Many are homeless and live in extreme poverty. Many women have their children taken away by the state, are forced to stay in abusive relationships, go to prison for acts of survival, or turn to substance abuse.

There is a newly built women’s prison in Massachusetts where 40 percent of the women have mental health issues and 85 percent have substance abuse issues. In the wake of severe budget cuts, instead of providing social services like drug treatment programs, mental health programs, jobs, childcare, etc., the state is throwing women in jail.

The Women’s Fightback Network in Boston is demanding that the governor declare an economic state of emergency. WFN brings to the forefront how women have been disproportionately victimized by foreclosures, evictions, job loss and budget cuts. Anita Hill wrote an article last year stating that women were particular targets of subprime predatory lenders, especially elderly women and Black and Latina women. One loan officer talked about how she would add many additional costs to the mortgage loan if the client “appeared uneducated, inarticulate, was a minority

or was particularly young or old.”

With winter coming, one demand is that the governor order the utility companies to immediately stop all shutoffs of heat and electricity and restore services to all who have been shut off, along with the demand for debt cancellation.

The largest electric company in Massachusetts issued more than 100,000 shutoff notices this past May. Four thousand people entered the winter last year with their utilities shut off. How many will die from using unsafe space heaters, candles and stoves to keep warm? After a recent press conference we received many calls from people who had had their heat or electricity shut off. The majority were from women, mothers with very young children—children who were sick or disabled, women caring for elders. One woman could not pay her electric bill because paying for medications was her priority.

We like to call our campaign Power to the People because, as women leaders, what we have foremost in our minds is how to help empower women to fight back; to lead the struggles that affect them most; to go against the grain of capitalism which isolates women from each other, sows distrust, shames, demoralizes and blames us.

How can we engage women who are struggling just to survive? How can we win more activists to the party and the WFN who can reach out more broadly?

The working class today is thoroughly multinational and more than one-half women. This lays the basis for the political leadership of our class to be taken up by the more oppressed. No revolution can be successful without the participation of women.

As Hugo Chávez said, “Capitalism is sexist; socialism can’t be sexist. ... Only women have the commitment, passion and love needed to make a revolution; to be the motor, the cutting edge and the fire of the revolution.” □

# Video workshop at WWP conference

Special to Workers World

In an effort to meet the increasing need for organization in this time of increasing class-consciousness and struggle, Peoples Video Network held a break-fast workshop at the recent Workers World Conference. The conference drew interested participants from all over the country. Reflecting that, the early morning workshop had activists from Boston, San Diego, Chicago, Detroit, Miami, Philadelphia and the greater New York area. The goal was to coordinate reporting news of the struggle as an alternative to the corporate media.

Sue Harris, New York co-director of PVN, described the 15-year history of the network, highlighting its 10 years in public-access television, with 50 weekly shows nationwide, and the production of

“Poison Dust,” a full-length, nationally distributed documentary about depleted uranium.

She mentioned the more recent appearance of PVN on YouTube/peoplesvideo, workers.tv and peoplesvideo.tv. Stressing the wider reach of on-line broadcasting, she reported that some of the videos presented on YouTube reached tens of thousands—particularly prison interviews with Mumia Abu-Jamal as well as videos about the immigration struggle and Palestine.

Harris said, “We need to seize the means of production from the corporate media and tell our own story.”

Joel Stephen, an emerging professional videographer, spoke briefly about his work in corporate media. The corporate media approach to news-gathering obfus-

*Continued on page 10*



# Colombia's key role in Latin America

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Compañero Sam Marcy, the founder of Workers World Party/Mundo Obrero, wrote an article during the first presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson in 1983-84 about the right of self-determination and the class struggle.

"In Marx's time," he wrote, "the slogan, as stated in the Communist Manifesto, was: 'Workers of the world unite.' To this slogan Lenin added the oppressed peoples. So now it reads: 'Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!' It introduced a substantial difference in the approach to the oppressed peoples abroad and, no less important, the super-exploited and oppressed people at home in the internal colonies. While many decades have passed since Lenin's formulation of the question, it now more than ever needs a proper application since the assault of monopoly capitalism becomes ever more onerous and threatening day by day."

Twenty-five years later, neoliberal globalization has made this formulation even more relevant and urgent. And though it applies to working and oppressed peoples of the entire planet, I would like to address its significance to the peoples and the struggles in Latin America and the Caribbean. [Joubert-Ceci spoke of the many struggles in the region, then focused on Colombia.]

Obama's victory was celebrated throughout the world and also in the

Americas. In Colombia, for example, which has the second-largest population of Afro descendants in Latin America after Brazil, there were car caravans, honking and dancing, just like in my neighborhood in Philadelphia.

Nowhere in Latin America and the Caribbean have the masses been struggling more fiercely and steadfastly than in Colombia. Women, youth, human rights advocates and trade unionists defy the criminal and repressive forces of the fascist regime of President Alvaro Uribe—its police, its army and its paramilitaries.

Colombia is now a center for U.S. imperialism in the region, the Israel of Latin America. Colombia is the hope of the Pentagon and the ruling class to undermine the progressive governments of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador. It is the U.S. corporations' hope to continue reaping huge profits and natural resources from the Colombian people, particularly through the Free Trade Agreement.

But two recent and still ongoing struggles, in the face of a severe financial crisis in that country, have made it very difficult for both the Uribe paramilitary government and several of the U.S. corporations to conduct business as usual. And what is most crucial is that these struggles are being fought by the two sectors of Colombian society that have been the most excluded, the most exploited: the Afro-Colombians and the Indigenous people.

Last September, when attempts to negotiate with the bosses failed, 12,500 sugarcane cutters went on strike in the southwest of the country. They work in eight refineries that produce both sugar and ethanol for the benefit of the Colombian oligarchy and the U.S. companies Cargill and ExxonMobil.

The vast majority of sugarcane cutters—known as "corteros"—are of African descent. Their existence in this highly subsidized industry is, as one worker said, "like slavery, only that we no longer have chains."

The workers cut sugarcane for 12 to 16 backbreaking hours a day in order to receive a monthly pay of \$150 to \$300. Of the 12,500 workers, only 485 are direct employees. Some 9,500 are subcontracted through the infamous Cooperatives of Associated Labor (CTA). CTAs are nothing but an effort to undermine and replace unions and exploit even further the Colombian workers.

Under a CTA the worker is a "partner" of the company, not a worker, has to pay for his or her health care, and has no benefits, no vacation time, nothing. They even



Berta Joubert-Ceci

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

have to get their own transportation and tools for harvesting sugarcane.

There are 10,000 CTAs in different industries throughout the country. Ending these so-called cooperatives has been one of the demands of the corteros. They also demanded Sunday and holiday pay, a direct work contract, labor stability, health care, education and housing.

At this time, after 56 days on strike, after intimidation by paramilitaries at the service of the companies, after the use of police to clear the mills of striking workers, after the arrest of several leaders and after even the aid of a progressive senator who supported the strike, the workers in seven of the eight refineries have settled.

Not all their demands were met, but as Adolfo Tigreros, an advisor to one of the unions, said: "The most important achievement was to put the CTAs in the public eye, so that [people] realize that they are a model for undermining labor rights and unions in Colombia."

Throughout the strike and mobilization, the corteros received great solidarity from unions, from social organizations and from the Indigenous people who were conducting a "minga," a peaceful gathering and protest. On Oct. 12, the Indigenous

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## Deep roots of WWP's internationalism

By John Catalinotto

Workers World Party's history of international solidarity has its roots in a time when, though we were the strongest defenders of the Soviet Union against imperialism, we were isolated from the world communist movement centered in Moscow. We were happy on the occasions our work was recognized, as when North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh in 1963 recognized the role of Youth Against War and Fascism [WWP's youth organization] in initiating demonstrations to get the U.S. out of Vietnam.

Our party chairperson Sam Marcy and the other leaders not only insisted that the party youth put international solidarity in action, they set the example by disrupting the United Nations in solidarity with Lumumba's Congo in 1960. We marched in Times Square to say "Hands off Cuba" in 1962, held a public meeting to defend the Indonesian communists who were being slaughtered in 1965, and were the only ones to picket at the U.N. to protest the June 1967 U.S.-Israeli war.

Whether these actions won recognition or temporarily isolated us, we learned this was what we had to do if we wanted to think of ourselves as revolutionaries.

Today, there is no single international center to the movement. The workers' movement is only beginning to recover from the disappearance of the USSR. But the world economic crisis forces it to recover. Our party has both the responsibility and the opportunity to play an important role, simply because we are located in the center of world imperialism. What we do here is magnified 100 times.

Proletarian internationalism is in our hearts. Only now our actions go over the Internet to the world. How we wish we could have done that with Comrade Sam Marcy's writings.

This past year, for example, our WW articles have been sent all over the world.

Besides those we publish in English and Spanish, some are translated to Arabic, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Russian, and sometimes Chinese, posted on websites and read by communists and class-conscious workers.

We also actively fight against Washington's war drive. Our record of consistent anti-imperialist positions in the entire post-Soviet period has established us as a reliable ally of all anti-imperialist and national liberation struggles worldwide.

We participate in solidarity trips to Cuba to break the blockade, such as the FIST trip last year or the Venceremos Brigade or the Pastors for Peace campaigns. We take part in tribunals in Colombia against



John Catalinotto

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

the state and the transnational corporations, and the tribunal on Israeli War Crimes in Lebanon. We help organize the Tijuana labor conference that takes place each December.

Some of the recent international conferences we've had delegations at are mainly for discussion and exchange of ideas—this year in Mexico City at the Workers Party meeting, in Havana for the Marxism discussion, the recent gathering of Artists and Intellectuals in Defense of Humanity in Caracas, among others.

To promote joint actions, we have recently participated in the meeting of the International League of Peoples Struggle in Hong Kong, and also of an allied movement of migrant workers, and we helped set up the International Anti-Imperialist Peoples Struggle Coordinating Committee

at a meeting in Kolkata, West Bengal, last December. In January, this group will be part of a larger forum in Beirut that should represent the interests of the resistance movements of the Middle East and anti-imperialist forces elsewhere.

We could not expect a new international to exist without a new revolutionary upsurge. Yet these organizations can create a framework for solidarity in struggle.

The transnational corporations have organized production internationally. The imperialist ruling class has the IMF and NATO to oversee its interests. The workers and oppressed deserve their own international coordination.

The party can only earn its revolutionary reputation by fighting the class and national struggle here at home, but it will do it with organizers who have trained their brain and muscle, by habit and by understanding, with an internationalism that makes no move without considering the interests of the most oppressed of the world. □

## Messages to WWP conference

By John Catalinotto  
New York

In this third and final report on some 25 messages of solidarity to the Nov. 15-16 Workers World Party National Conference, the focus is on the U.S. elections and the need for a deeper level of international cooperation.

The Workers' General Confederation-Brazil wrote that the Brazilian workers showed "our joy for the impressive victory that the American people conquered with the victory of Barack Obama in the elections of Nov. 4. The multitude that came out to the streets expressing its hope in the changes shows that a new moment can begin."

Marcia Campos of the Women's International Democratic Federation wrote that the crisis "aided greatly in electing the Democrat Barack Obama president of the USA, vehemently defeating President Bush and all he represents. For the first time, a Black person was elected president of the USA. The participation of the people of the U.S. in the elections will remain an historic event for the USA."

The Communist Party of Brazil wrote that "the people of the world hope that President-elect Barack Obama keeps his promise of withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq and that he removes with urgency the criminal blockade of Cuba."

The Union of African Workers-Senegal raised important questions: "It's certain

that this electoral victory is historical and very symbolic, but one has to ask what the working class could expect from the first Black president? Is Obama capable of making any significant changes toward the national liberation of oppressed nations in the U.S. and elsewhere? Is he going to concentrate on fixing the capitalist crisis or to help get rid of the system itself, knowing that it is the cause of the crisis?"

Remarking on the same event, the Party of Liberation in Argentina wrote: "It is obvious that [WWP] will have to make a wise and very concrete analysis of the future Obama government, which in our humble judgment will also be an

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ON MUMBAI

# Poverty is violence

*Continued from page 1*

including six from the U.S. and eight from Israel.

The Pakistani government denies any relationship to the attacks. It has been under tremendous pressure from Washington to allow U.S. air and ground forces to pursue Muslim militants inside Pakistan anywhere, at any time. In fact, there have been gun battles in recent months between Pakistani soldiers and U.S. Special Forces who violated Pakistani territory and sovereignty.

The U.S. military interventions in Afghanistan and Pakistan are impacting all of South Asia. Since the Indian ruling class and its major political parties joined U.S. imperialism’s “war on terror,” they have stepped up repression of the large Muslim population in India.

In fact, attacks against Muslims in India in recent years have led to greater loss of life than just occurred in Mumbai, but they received little coverage compared to this one, aimed at the foreign and domestic elite.

In 2002 in the state of Gujarat, just north of Mumbai, extreme right-wing Hindu chauvinist organizations massacred up to 2,000 Muslims and drove 200,000 out of their homes. This led to the radicalization of many Muslim youth because the government was unable or unwilling to protect them.

Severe repression by the Indian government against the Muslim majority in the disputed state of Kashmir has also aroused deep anger. The Indian state brutally attacked demonstrations of hundreds of thousands in Kashmir this summer.

India has been seen as a rapidly modernizing country. But the wealth associated with capitalist globalization and glossy high-tech industries enriches only a tiny fraction of the people. High-tech industries employ just 0.2 percent of India’s 1 billion people. For the majority of the population, poverty has grown enormously. Almost half of all Indians live below the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day. The World Bank reports that half of Indian children—the highest rate in the world—are so malnourished that their bodies fail to achieve normal size.

This is the real violence and the source of widening instability.

The Muslims in India number 150 million—13 percent of the population—and are the poorest segment in a very poor country. They have the lowest literacy, lowest income, highest infant mortality,

highest unemployment and the worst jobs. One third of villages in India with a majority Muslim population have no schools at all.

Media reports describe the attackers as offering to negotiate for the release of Islamic prisoners and as denouncing the state violence in Kashmir.

Mumbai is considered the commercial capital of India. It is the center of finance and the film industry. The population has doubled in the past 25 years to 18 million, but more than half the people live in vast slums.

The Taj Mahal Palace and Tower Hotel, one of the two hotels attacked, is a landmark building similar to the Empire State Building or the World Trade Center in New York. It is owned by the Tata Group, a hated corporate giant.

The U.S. media is making many comparisons to the Sept. 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center. More ominous are the calls for a 9/11 response—code words for creating a huge security apparatus, authorizing mass arrests, restricting civil liberties and possibly opening a war with Pakistan.

The right-wing BJP Party, which was in power during the pogroms against Muslims in Gujarat, has called on the current government to follow the example of the U.S. after 9/11. The talk of war is now on the agenda, with the far greater violence that would bring.

There is no solution under the capitalist system to the growing gulf between the fabulously wealthy and the desperately poor in South Asia. The only recourse of U.S. imperialism as well as the Indian and Pakistani ruling classes is to try to divert the population with intensified communal, class and caste antagonisms, while relying increasingly on greater repression and an ever-larger military machine.

Marxists know that violence against wealthy individuals and their politicians does not end the system of exploitation and oppression. They also understand that, when there seem to be no alternatives, such actions are bound to arise from the violence of the system and the misery and desperation that millions experience.

Building unity and resistance among the oppressed workers and peasants now divided into competing nationalities, religions and castes is the only effective way to combat the far greater violence caused by capitalist and imperialist exploitation and war. □

# Colombia’s key role in Latin America

*Joubert-Ceci— continued from page 9*

people of Colombia started a brave walk throughout the same regions where the cutters were striking—the southwest.

They walked hundreds of kilometers to try to meet and confront President Uribe with their demands: no to the FTA with the U.S., agrarian reform, and the end of state terrorism against Indigenous people, labor and social leaders. The agenda is not only for the Indigenous, it is a people’s agenda.

Three times they tried “walking the word” (caminando la palabra), long walks through the southwestern region. The first time, the police killed three people and injured dozens in a confrontation. When the walkers—more than 30,000 Indigenous people and their supporters—reached Cali to meet with Uribe, they waited three hours. After that, most left.

Uribe finally arrived, but by then there were only a couple hundred people. Uribe called them terrorists.

The walkers tried again to meet with him in La Maria. Uribe made empty promises, no land returns, nothing. Now the Indigenous are walking again, this time to Bogotá. They expect to get there on Nov. 21.

These have been not only long walks, they have been efforts to organize and join with the different social movements. The Indigenous people have demonstrated

great solidarity with the corteros and have included the corteros’ demands in their own. They call this a “minga” of social and community resistance.

Uribe’s government is being exposed by the people in Colombia and by the international community as having close links to the paramilitary, to drug trafficking, to the many massacres and assassinations of Indigenous, Afro-Colombians, peasants, labor and social leaders.

A recent report from Amnesty International says that under Uribe in the year 2007, some 1,400 civilians were killed and 305,000 displaced, more than in 2006. So far this year, 45 union leaders have been assassinated. Last year 39 were murdered.

The struggle of the people in Colombia is our struggle. In these times of globalization, more than ever, the slogan “The workers’ struggle has no borders” holds true.

Let us say, as they say in Puerto Rico, “Que la crisis la paguen los ricos.” Let the rich, the capitalists, pay for the crisis. That is what the workers and oppressed in Colombia are doing.

Let us here, in the heart of imperialism, absorb the lessons of struggle of our brothers and sisters south of the Rio Grande. Let us unite and together fight this oppressive regime of exploitation.

Workers and oppressed of the world, let’s unite! □

# Messages to WWP conference

*Continued from page 9*

imperialist government. WWP will know how to resolve this contradiction.”

## On the common struggle

The Socialist Front of Puerto Rico wrote: “We know that as revolutionaries in the belly of the beast you have a firm commitment to the struggle that will liberate our people of Puerto Rico, as well as to the Cuban Revolution and the developing Bolivarian Revolution in our America.”

Leila Ghanem, an organizer of an international forum to take place in Beirut on Jan. 16-18, wrote: “We salute your political stand and your solidarity with the people of the Middle East, who are in the first line of opposition to imperialism and predatory capitalism and colonialism in Iraq, in Lebanon and in Palestine. Your solidarity goes beyond compassion with the suffering that our people experience but it is a real class solidarity, which confronts imperialism on its own territory and within its machinery.”

The Energy Workers Front in Mexico

said: “The collapse of capitalism is not going to happen either immediately, nor can it happen spontaneously. We lack an organized and conscious struggle on a world scale. We need a transitional program from an organization that can extend and consolidate to the movement and that can contribute in a practical way to solidarity with all workers and peoples in struggle.”

The Anti-Imperialist Camp wrote: “We believe that we will see increased wars driven by the U.S. and NATO not only in the Middle East but also in Eastern Europe and other parts of the world. In this sense we look forward to a strong cooperation, while working toward the unification of the global anti-imperialist forces as well as the construction of new anti-capitalist nuclei also in the West.”

These parties, along with the Portuguese Communist Party and the Bolivarian Continental Coordinating Committee, sent their greetings to the comrades here and wishes for our success. □

# Video workshop at WWP conference

*Continued from page 8*

cates and hides the truth, he said, and makes it impossible to get one’s hands on equipment or training. He compared that to his experience with PVN, where he got hands-on training and experience in situations where it really counts.

Robert Summerville, a veteran public access producer, gave a brief history of his Long Island network and how it has influenced local government and com-

munity. He was eager to coordinate work with PVN. Summerville talked about the need to keep topics in the public consciousness, unlike the corporate media that focuses on topics and then drops them. The repetition of news of the same struggles from all over the country can produce a powerful momentum in people’s consciousness.

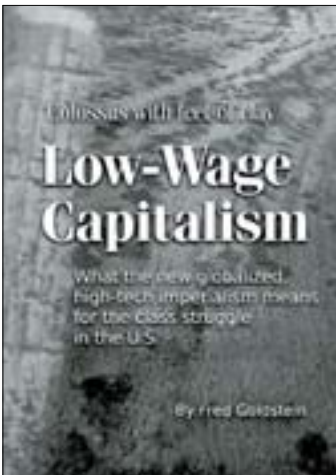
Nana Soul of Blackwaxx emphasized the power of collective planning at this time.

Berta Joubert-Ceci, PVN co-director from Philadelphia, said that joining forces, trading information and coordinating the work improved chances for funding and learning. The workshop was a step in the process of organizing to meet the needs of the coming period. □

# Low-Wage Capitalism

Timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx’s law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval. The analysis rests on three basic developments in the last three decades:

- The world’s workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.
- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.
- The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.



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# Puppet government near collapse in Somalia

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**  
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

The Ethiopian government on Nov. 25 announced it was withdrawing its military forces from neighboring Somalia. This represents a defeat for the foreign policy aims of Washington, which encouraged the government of Meles Zenawi to invade Somalia in December 2006.

The Ethiopian military force is now down to some 2,000 troops from an initial 12,000. The Ethiopians are supposed to be replaced by 8,000 African Union “peacekeeping” forces.

However, only 2,600 AU troops, supplied by the U.S.-backed countries of Uganda and Burundi, have been deployed in the capital of Mogadishu. Other nations such as Nigeria, Ghana, Malawi and Kenya, which had pledged to send troops, have not deployed any.

In a candid statement, President Abdullahi Yusuf of the U.S.-backed Transitional Federal Government in Somalia, which is bolstered militarily by the Ethiopian army, said the regime is “on the verge of collapse.” (Reuters, Nov. 16) Fighters from the al-Shabaab organization have not only taken control of vast areas of the country, but are openly challenging the puppet forces inside Mogadishu.

“Most of the country is in the hands of Islamists and we are only in Mogadishu and Baidoa, where there is daily war,” said Yusuf, speaking before an assembly of 100 Somali legislators in Kenya.

Yusuf spoke about the fragility of the TFG government, saying: “We, ourselves, are behind the problems and we are accountable in this world and in the hereafter. Islamists have been capturing all towns and now control Elasha. It is every man for himself if the government collapses.”

In a further sign of disarray, Yusuf accused Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein of the political problems within the regime. The government has failed to appoint a new cabinet since the previous one was dissolved months ago.

## Resistance forces advance

As the TFG bickered over cabinet seats within an ineffective regime, reports from the ground in Somalia indicated that the al-Shabaab resistance movement had taken control of the port town of Barawe, located approximately 110 miles from the capital. During the week of Nov. 10, the movement seized the town of Merka, where a strategic airstrip is located.

In Mogadishu, where the TFG claims it still maintains control, al-Shabaab fighters operate openly, carrying out recruitment drives and training exercises. The organization is already presenting itself as a parallel government to the U.S.-backed TFG.

The resistance forces also consist of groups within the Union of Islamic Courts that are negotiating agreements with the TFG in Djibouti. This faction, led by Sheik Hassan Dahir Aweys, has been described as more “moderate” than al-Shabaab, which was the youth wing of the UIC during its burgeoning period of influence prior to the Ethiopian invasion.

Another prominent Islamic leader, Sheik Hassan Dahir Aweys, who was also a part of the UIC, has rejected talks with the TFG until the Ethiopians withdraw. The U.S. government has accused Aweys of supporting “terrorism” and has actively discouraged the TFG from reaching any agreement with his forces.

An article in the Nov. 24 Chicago Tribune by correspondent Paul Salopek points out the central role of the U.S. government in the current situation in Somalia.

“It is a standoff war in which the Pentagon lobs million-dollar cruise missiles into a famine-haunted African wasteland the size of Texas, hoping to kill lone terror suspects who might be dozing in candlelit huts. The raids’ success or failure is almost impossible to verify,” writes Salopek.

“It is a covert war in which the CIA has recruited gangs of unsavory warlords to hunt down and kidnap Islamic militants and ... secretly imprison them offshore, aboard U.S. warships.”

Salopek states that U.S. efforts in this Horn of Africa nation are bound to result in another defeat: “It is a policy time bomb that will be inherited by the incoming Obama administration: a little-known front in the global war on terrorism that Washington appears to be losing, if it hasn’t already been lost.”

The article quotes Ken Menkhaus, a leading Somalia scholar at Davidson College in North Carolina: “Somalia is one of the great unrecognized U.S. policy failures since 9/11. By any rational metric, what we’ve ended up with there today is the opposite of what we wanted.”

## Will policy change under Obama?

It is not yet clear whether the incoming U.S. administration will make any significant changes in its military policy toward the Horn of Africa. However, President-elect Barack Obama’s selection of several top-level Clinton administration figures indicates a continuing reliance on military force in the region.

Bill Clinton inherited the invasion of Somalia initiated by the George H.W. Bush administration in December 1992. The situation grew tense during 1993, leading to coordinated resistance by the Somali masses that forced the U.S. to withdraw from the country in 1994.

This Nov. 20 the U.N. Security Council passed a unanimous resolution to impose sanctions against so-called “pirates, arms smugglers and perpetrators of instability in Somalia.” (AP, Nov. 21)

The council’s “quick approval of the British-sponsored resolution was followed by an open meeting on the deteriorating situation in Somalia—both on land and at sea off its nearly 3,900-km coastline, which includes some of the world’s most important shipping routes.”

Deputy U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Rosemary DiCarlo appealed for immediate measures to address the situation in the Horn of Africa, which is threatening an Oct. 26 ceasefire agreement between some Islamic groups and the TFG. The more militant resistance forces such as al-Shabaab are not party to the Oct. 26 agreement.

DiCarlo called for strengthening the 3,450 African Union troops in Mogadishu, supposedly so much-needed food aid can be delivered to the population—the same excuse given for the U.S. intervention in 1992.

DiCarlo said that if 6,000 AU forces from various countries cannot be mobilized, then the U.N. should intervene directly in Somalia.

A greater U.N., U.S. or E.U. military involvement in the Horn of Africa will prove disastrous for these entities. The Somali people have a proven history of successful resistance against imperialist intervention.

The peoples of the U.S. and the E.U. have no desire to see their governments drawn into a protracted struggle in this region. The anti-war forces in these countries must oppose military intervention and uphold the right of self-determination and sovereignty for the Somali people and other nations throughout the Horn of Africa. □

## ‘Sing Loud Africa’



# Ode to MIRIAM MAKEBA, Beloved Mama Africa

By **Larry Hales**

*“I picked up the soil from this unknown grave/ and blew it up to the wind as if to make reference one day/ and I said/ mayibuyee Africa/ sing loud Africa/ sing loud/ sing to the people.”*

—**From “When You Come Back” by Vusi Mahlasela**

Vusi Mahlasela, a great singer who himself was banned from his homeland, wrote this song for the many exiles and imprisoned South African freedom fighters and artists.

Miriam Makeba, who died on Nov. 10, was one of the many. She was banned for 30 years, from 1960 to 1990. The name “Mama Africa” was bestowed upon Makeba because she was the first person to make African music heard and known internationally.

This is an ode to Miriam Makeba and her still resounding voice. Though her physical form is gone forever, her visage will remain, not only in the hearts and minds of those closest to her, but also in the minds of the millions who have heard her voice, those who have yet to do so and the millions for whom she sang.

Makeba was born in Johannesburg in 1939 and began singing professionally in the early 1950s. She sang with a number of groups—such as the Cuban Brothers, the Manhattans, the all-female Skylarks, and with Hugh Masekela in the musical

“King Kong,” about a boxer.

She was introduced to the international stage through Lionel Rogosin’s film “Come Back Africa,” a dramatic documentary that displayed the racist apartheid system.

Makeba’s passport was revoked while she traveled with this film and presented it to an international audience.

In a Skylark song called “Miriam’s Goodbye to Africa,” a speaker intones, “Today we say goodbye to Africa’s queen of soul, Miriam Makeba. Good luck Miriam and please do come back to us soon.” Makeba replies, “Goodbye mother/ goodbye father/ and to you my little baby/ goodbye/ until we meet again/ farewell dear friends/ I am leaving/ may the good lord be with you all/ though I’m leaving/ my heart remains with you.”

The song, meant as a tribute, has become a haunting lament.

Neither Makeba nor the members of her group could know that she would be gone for 30 years, that she would never again see her mother or be able to attend her funeral, and never see Sophiatown as she remembered it, for it would be bulldozed to the ground and replaced by a suburb for whites only.

Many events would pass which no one could foresee. But the conditions in South Africa were dictated by a racist system that was formally instituted in 1948 by then-Minister of Native Affairs Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd—who later became

prime minister and described apartheid as “a policy of good neighborliness.”

Umkhonto we Sizwe was the armed wing of the African National Congress. Vuyisile Mini, an Umkhonto activist and singer who was murdered by a hangman’s noose, would write a song taunting Verwoerd titled, “Pasopa nansi ’ndon-demnyama we Verwoerd” (Look out, Verwoerd, here are the Black people). It would become a popular liberation song throughout the struggle to free South Africa from apartheid and white rule. Makeba later recorded a version of it.

Nelson Mandela said in his autobiography, alluding to himself, that a person is known by her or his response to conditions. Miriam Makeba, then, is known as a voice for freedom.

Each breath she took, like the terse exhalations in the song “Amampondo”—about Mpondo warriors, part of the Xhosa-speaking people, preparing for battle—was inspiration to the South African people, as theirs were to her.

While Makeba could not be in her homeland, she could sing the words of struggle for audiences who may not have otherwise been able to glean the conditions imposed upon the masses of Black people in South Africa by a European colonizer.

Sifiso Ntuli, an exiled activist, says in the film “Amandla”: “Song can communicate to people who otherwise would not have understood where we are coming from.”

Makeba’s voice was soaring and powerful and could evoke feelings of joy and celebration, such as “Pata Pata,” and pride, anger or sorrow. Whether she was singing in English or Xhosa, singing “Soweto Blues,” about the massacre of students protesting classroom instruction in Afrikaans, or “Khawuleza,” a song about what children shout to their mothers when the authorities are coming, she could communicate the conditions and the emotions of the oppressed.

Makeba would miss her mother’s funeral and those of her uncles killed in the Sharpeville massacre in 1960. Her daughter died at eight years old, after being reunited with Makeba and not able to return home. She would face scrutiny and surveillance and exile in another land while married to Kwame Ture, yet her resolve did not temper or wane.

Makeba continued to be a voice for the South African people and renowned worldwide. Her spirit will exist in song and deed and her voice shall become a voice for new generations and new struggles for a better world.

*Long Live Mama Africa!*

*Hales saw and heard Miriam Makeba in Cuba in December 2006, when she came out of retirement to perform in celebrations organized for the 80th birthday of Cuban President Fidel Castro.*



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## Comprendiendo la situación mundial

# Otro aspecto del ‘Capitalismo de Bajos Salarios’

Por Deirdre Griswold

Hemos discutido en esta conferencia dos libros que elaboran nuestra posición sobre cómo los cambios que se han dado en el capitalismo han impactado en la clase obrera: “Alta Tecnología, Bajos Salarios” por Sam Marcy y el libro más reciente “El Capitalismo de Salarios Bajos” por Fred Goldstein.

El libro de Marcy, escrito en 1985, describió cómo la revolución científico-tecnológica estaba cambiando los medios de producción y la clase obrera en sí. Un gran cambio se estaba gestando en la economía con menos empleos en la industria de manufactura y más en la industria de servicios. La nueva tecnología cambió la necesidad de las destrezas para los empleos en esta nueva fase. Los patronos buscaban trabajador@s l@s cuales, por su opresión, se veían forzad@s a aceptar trabajos con salarios bajos. Más mujeres y gente de color comenzaron a emplearse en Estados Unidos. Marcy predijo que esto llevaría a socavar el poder social de l@s trabajador@s más privilegiad@s, que generalmente eran hombres blancos.

Lenin describió por primera vez el desarrollo de una aristocracia obrera privilegiada en los países opresores en su libro “Imperialismo.” Marcy mostró cómo esto se comenzaba a resquebrajar bajo la contrapresión de la nueva tendencia. Él predijo que se daría un cambio en la conciencia de la clase obrera, donde l@s trabajador@s oprimid@s jugarían un papel de liderazgo en las nuevas luchas y donde habría una posibilidad más grande para la solidaridad entre tod@s l@s obrer@s.

El compañero Larry Holmes en su presentación de apertura explicó cómo el libro sobre el capitalismo de salarios bajos escrito por el compañero Fred se desarrolla sobre esta importante tesis. Y que este fenómeno—la nivelación de l@s trabajador@s con mejores salarios, la cual precedió la actual crisis económica



MO FOTO: GARY WILSON

Deirdre Griswold

pero que continúa aún más fuerte—es la base material para la solidaridad entre l@s trabajador@s negr@s, latin@s y blanc@s que irrumpió en estas elecciones y cambió el escenario político en Estados Unidos con la elección del primer presidente negro.

No se pretende minimizar las extraordinarias destrezas de Barack Obama como figura política. Pero ha habido muchos otros líderes negros con grandes destrezas a través de los años, y que no tuvieron ninguna posibilidad de éxito. Incluso Jesse Jackson, a quien le respaldaba todo un movimiento, no pudo lograr la nominación del Partido Demócrata, mucho menos ganar las elecciones generales.

Hemos hablado sobre las razones por las cuales un fuerte grupo en la clase dominante le gustaría que Obama les representara en este difícil momento para el imperialismo estadounidense. Esto ciertamente le facilitó a Obama el recibir un tratamiento decente en los medios de comunicación, recaudar fondos y comunicarse con millones de personas. Sin embargo nada de eso hubiera ocurrido si el intrínseco racismo representado por McCain y Palin hubiera resonado en un sector más grande entre l@s trabajador@s, o si los sindicatos y

otras organizaciones multiétnicas de la clase trabajadora no se hubieran movilizado para atraer a l@s votantes.

El “Capitalismo de Salarios Bajos” pone al día la tesis de Marcy al dedicar mucha atención a la división internacional del trabajo que existe actualmente con la rápida extensión de la globalización. También señala cómo los cambios de la manera en que el capitalismo funciona hoy en día comprueban una vez más las enseñanzas más básicas del marxismo y el leninismo.

Sin embargo, quiero mencionar otro aspecto del libro de Goldstein, uno que posiblemente es todavía difícil de discutir en este país por la constante presencia del anticomunismo de la clase dominante desde el comienzo de la Revolución Rusa y especialmente durante el período de la Guerra Fría.

Tan importante como su análisis de la globalización imperialista y la forma en que esta ha forzado el declive de los salarios de l@s trabajador@s en los EEUU, es lo que este libro dice sobre la destrucción de la Unión Soviética y los países socialistas del Este de Europa.

Debemos recordar que el libro de Marcy que predijo un incremento en la militancia de l@s trabajador@s, fue escrito en 1985, hace 23 años. ¿Por qué ha tomado tanto tiempo para que el impacto político de la revolución científica-tecnológica se sienta aquí? ¿Cómo fue posible que los capitalistas pudieran postergar hasta ahora la crisis de sobreproducción que fue claramente visible en la caída precipitada de la bolsa de valores del 1987, cuando la bolsa perdió un 25 por ciento de su valor en un solo día? ¿Qué fue lo que les dio a ellos y a su sistema la oportunidad de empezar una nueva vida, una nueva confianza para poder seguir su ofensiva despiadada contra l@s trabajador@s y hacerlo con impunidad?

Lo que les ayudó, como explica Goldstein, fue el colapso final del sistema de estados obreros en Europa que habían permanecido como un sistema social rival por más de 70 años. Esto tuvo un efecto catastrófico para l@s trabajador@s allí. Todos los índices sociales —esperanza de vida, mortandad infantil, incremento de enfermedades contagiosas y hambre, opresión sexual de las mujeres, incremento de antagonismos entre las distintas nacionalidades— demostró que el retorno al capitalismo fue un gigantesco paso en retroceso.

L@s trabajador@s en la Europa del Oeste capitalista, donde la socialdemocracia había sido sólida prometiendo cosas maravillosas si solo los malos comunistas pudieran ser derrocados en el Este, también quedaron en la defensiva. No pasó mucho tiempo luego del colapso del

bloque soviético cuando fueron recordados muchos de los beneficios sociales que l@s trabajador@s en el Oeste habían ganado. La caída de la Unión Soviética también influyó en la decisión de China de depender más en el mercado para construir su economía. Esto significó abrir el país a mucha inversión extranjera y a la producción de mercancías para la exportación.

Estos dos acontecimientos — el desmantelamiento de la Unión Soviética y sus aliados en Europa del Este, y la apertura a gran escala de China a la inversión extranjera — duplicó el número de trabajador@s en el mundo disponible para la explotación imperialista.

El Partido WW/Mundo Obrero desde sus comienzos, ha comprendido las grandes contradicciones en la Unión Soviética entre el modo socializado de producción y la burocracia privilegiada que fue resultado de su aislamiento, de su subdesarrollo económico y de la falta de mano de obra calificada en los primeros días de la revolución.

Todo eso se complicó haciendo la situación inmensamente más difícil, por los ataques combinados de los imperialistas. Catorce países imperialistas invadieron al nuevo estado de l@s trabajador@s en 1919. Los fascistas alemanes destruyeron enormes zonas de la Unión Soviética y mataron a decenas de millones en la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Los imperialistas estadounidenses amenazaron a la Unión Soviética con una guerra nuclear y la forzó a participar en una carrera armamentista altamente costosa. Todo eso desgastó a muchos líderes del Partido Comunista así que cuando llegó la contrarrevolución, fueron líderes del partido como Mikhail Gorbachev que inició las llamadas reformas, y l@s trabajador@s estaban totalmente confundid@s.

Aunque nosotr@s nunca cerramos los ojos ante los problemas en la Unión Soviética, también comprendimos que la URRS permanecía como un bastión de fuerza en contra de los codiciosos imperialistas. La Unión Soviética ayudó a innumerables movimientos de liberación nacional. Ayudó a la Revolución Cubana sobrevivir el sabotaje, la invasión y el bloqueo imperialista.

Su mera existencia forzó a los imperialistas conceder mejores condiciones a l@s trabajador@s, especialmente en Europa de Oeste. Impidió a los explotadores robar a una sexta parte de la superficie de la tierra sus valiosos minerales, su madera y su petróleo.

Todo eso cambió cuando fue desmantelada la Unión Soviética.

Es necesario que comprendamos no solamente los Estados Unidos sino el mundo entero para poder hacer el camino hacia la victoria de la clase trabajadora. □



Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, René González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez and Fernando González Llort.



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